



Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology  
1751 Calhoun Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

1 Oct 03

## **Clinician Public Health Advisory**

### **Update 1 – Increased Surveillance for Cases Associated with a Multi-state, Foodborne Acute Hepatitis A Outbreak**

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) is requesting heightened surveillance for persons presenting with symptoms consistent with acute hepatitis A and epidemiologically-linked exposures to an ongoing multi-state foodborne Hepatitis A outbreak.

### **Background Information**

On September 18, the Knox County (Tennessee) Health Department (KCHD) identified four cases of acute hepatitis A occurring in food handlers employed at an O'Charley's Restaurant. Currently, there are at least 57 cases of acute hepatitis A associated with O'Charley's Restaurants in Tennessee, and several others associated with O'Charley's Restaurants in Georgia and potentially in at least one additional state. Most cases identified to date have onset dates clustered around early to mid-September. An investigation to determine the source of the outbreak is underway.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHSS) also reported a diagnosis of acute hepatitis A infection in a food handler at an Asheville restaurant. The worker had handled salads and other ready-to-eat foods without gloves at Doc Chey's Noodle House during September 10-24. In addition, the NC DHHS is now investigating 10 additional cases of acute hepatitis A associated with this food handler. Of the 10 cases, nine occurred in persons who had eaten at Doc Chey's Noodle House during mid-late August; the remaining case occurred in a food handler at a second restaurant, The Laughing Seed (Asheville). This food handler has been epi-linked to the Doc Chey's restaurant.

There have been no confirmed cases of acute hepatitis A identified in South Carolina associated with this multi-state foodborne outbreak. Activity in South Carolina has been limited to the administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to those individuals with known epidemiological exposure links to the above-mentioned establishments.

As of 30 Sept 03, our local health departments have administered approximately 60 doses of serum immune globulin (IG) to persons evaluated as being linked to this outbreak. Evaluation regarding offering IG to patients is being done on a case-by-case basis by the local health departments and/or the SC DHEC Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology in Columbia.

## **Clinical and Epidemiological Indicators:**

The usual clinical presentation of Hepatitis A includes an abrupt onset with fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed within a few days by jaundice.

### **Clinical case definition:**

An acute illness with a) discrete onset of symptoms and b) jaundice or elevated serum aminotransferase levels

### **Laboratory criteria for diagnosis:**

Positive laboratory result for Immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibody to hepatitis A virus (anti-HAV)

**\*\* Note:** A positive laboratory result for total hepatitis A antibody (i.e. IgM and IgG) is not useful in assisting in the diagnosis of an acute hepatitis A case.

### **Epidemiological criteria (specific for this multi-state outbreak):**

Confirmed or suspect Hepatitis A cases associated with exposures to restaurants currently identified associated with the ongoing multi-state foodborne Hepatitis A outbreak.

## **Reporting**

1. Any laboratory confirmed acute Hepatitis A (i.e. IgM positive) case should be reported immediately, as per the current SC DHEC List of Reportable Conditions.
2. In addition, any clinical presentation consistent with acute Hepatitis A coupled with the epidemiological criteria described above, should also be reported to their state or local health departments, at the following numbers, for evaluation for PEP administration:

District/County Health Department phone numbers:

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Statewide Urgently Reportable Conditions and Consultation number (24hr/7day): 1-888-847-0902

## **Additional Sources of Information**

For additional information, check the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hepatitis A website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/a/index.htm>

SC DHEC Health Alert Network: <http://www.scdhec.gov/hs/han/notice.htm>